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Mob's Giancana Reportedly Headed CIA-Backed Conspiracy to Kill Castro

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Mob chief Sam Giancana at the behest of the Central Intelligence Agency reportedly organized a Mafia effort to assassinate Fidel Castro, sources have told The Times.

Time magazine, in its current issue, reports receiving similar information from other sources.

Time said the CIA had worked with Giancana, a powerful Chicago Mafia overlord, and Johnny Rosselli, another underworld figure, to kill the Cuban premier in the early 1960s.

According to the magazine, "The FBI inadvertently learned of the plot in investigating a burglary of comedian Dan Rowan's Las Vegas hotel room.

"Agents learned that the arrested prowlers had been assigned by the CIA as a favor to Giancana, who sought information to break up a budding romance between Rowan and Giancana's girlfriend, singer Phyllis McGuire."

Rowan confirmed Monday that his room in the Riviera Hotel had been

rifled and electronically bugged in "1960 or '61" in an effort to obtain information "about my involvement with" Miss McGuire.

He described the singer as "a close friend" whom he occasionally dated before his marriage. FBI agents told him, he said, that Giancana, who spent considerable time in Las Vegas in the early '60s, was behind the break-in and bugging.

"I even met the guy who did the bugging. He claimed to be a private investigator out of Miami. He was the coolest thing you ever saw.

"He didn't seem the least bit concerned (about being arrested). And I found out he was sprung (released from jail) quickly."

Rowan's comments on the incident came a day after the New York Times quoted two former aides to the late Sen. Robert F. Kennedy as saying that he had told them he stopped a CIA plan to use the Mafia to kill Castro. There have been other reports that American mobsters have made assassination attempts.

After his conviction here in 1971 in the Friars Club card cheating case,

Rosselli asserted he had worked with Robert A. Maheu, former aide to Howard Hughes, in attempts to kill Castro.

The statement was in affidavits and unsigned memoranda filed in Rosselli's behalf when he sought a reduction in his five-year prison term.

Rosselli's attorney, Adrian Marshall, told the court that a CIA mission in the early 1960s had called for the assassination of Castro. Marshall said the CIA had enlisted the aid of Maheu, who then sought assistance from Rosselli. Six attempts were made on the Cuban leader's life and, during one of them, a boat was shot out from under Rosselli, Marshall said.

Maheu would not comment at the time. But last year he testified in the trial of his complicated civil suit against Hughes that he himself had done "sensitive" work for the CIA in 1960 and 1961 in the Miami area.

He did not elaborate on his CIA chores but he admitted that he had been asked by the U.S. government to recruit Rosselli in connection with "a very sensitive assignment."

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